

SPORT

UEFA EURO 2020

'Worst feeling in the world'

AFP, London

England captain Harry Kane admitted his side's penalty shoot-out defeat in the Euro 2020 final against Italy on Sunday was "the worst feeling in the world".

Along with Harry Maguire, Kane was one of only two England players to score from the spot as Italy won the shoot-out 3-2 after a 1-1 draw following extra time at Wembley.

Marcus Rashford, Jadon Sancho and Bukayo Saka all missed their penalties, leaving England to rue a wasted opportunity to win their first major trophy since the 1966 World Cup.

"Penalties is the worst feeling in the world when you lose," Kane told ITV.

"Anyone can miss a penalty. Penalties is penalties. We went through a process. The boys did everything they could, it just wasn't our night."

Luke Shaw had given England a dream start when he scored in the second minute. But the fastest goal in Euro final history couldn't inspire England to victory as they gradually allowed Italy back into the match.

Leonardo Bonucci equalised in the second half, setting the stage for England's latest penalty horror after decades of past shoot-out defeats.

Tottenham striker Kane conceded England had played into Italy's hands by adopting a cautious approach in the first half.

"We were playing against a very good side. We got off to the perfect start. Maybe dropped a little too deep sometimes. They had a lot of the ball." "We looked fairly in control, they didn't create too many chances. They got their breakthrough from the set-piece and after that was 50-50."

After reaching their first European Championship final in an uplifting run to their first major title match since the 1966 World Cup, Kane insisted England would bounce back from the agonising loss. "You've got to hold your heads high. It's been a fantastic tournament."



PHOTO: REUTERS

'A renaissance for Italian football'

REUTERS, London



Italy manager Roberto Mancini said watching three years of hard work come to fruition with Euro 2020 glory on Sunday reduced him to tears at Wembley after his side edged England on penalties.

The Italians went behind early to a Luke Shaw goal but equalised in the second half through Leonardo Bonucci, before winning 3-2 in a shootout after a 1-1 draw following extra time.

It marked Italy's first European Championship title since 1968 and was the result of Mancini's intelligent rebuilding of the national team following their humiliating failure to qualify for the 2018 World Cup in Russia.

Asked about the tears he shed at full-time, Mancini said: "That was the emotion that happens after achieving something incredible, of seeing the guys celebrate, the

INDIVIDUAL AWARDS

- Golden Ball:** Gianluigi Donnarumma (Italy)
- Golden Boot:** Cristiano Ronaldo (Portugal)
- Young player of the tournament:** Pedri (Spain)
- Player of the final:** Leonardo Bonucci (Italy)

HIGHLIGHTS

- Luke Shaw's goal at 1min 57sec was the fastest in a European Championship final.
- Leonardo Bonucci became the oldest player (34 years 71 days) to score in a Euro final.
- It was only the second time that a Euro final was decided on penalties.
- Gianluigi Donnarumma became the first goalkeeper to win the player of the tournament award.

fans celebrating in the stands.

"It was seeing everything we have managed to create, all of the work we have put in over the last three years and specifically in the last 50 days, which have been very hard."

"We have got on very well, there have never been issues and the players deserve credit for that. Not just on the pitch, they did a brilliant job there, but I think it is the fact we have been able to forge this team spirit. "They have created something that can never be separated going forward. They will always be synonymous with this triumph because they have so much respect for one another."

Veteran defender Bonucci won UEFA's star of the match award as he picked up his first international honour, nine years after losing the final of Euro 2012 to Spain.

The 34-year-old shouted "It's coming to Rome" at the camera after the game, a response to the "It's coming home" chant popular with England supporters. "We

heard it day in day out since the Denmark game, that the cup would be coming home to London," Bonucci said.

"Sorry for them, but actually the cup will be winging its way to Rome and that way Italians all over the world can savour this competition. "It's for them, it's for us, we have said since day one we believe we can do it. It is only right Italians celebrate in all four corners of the globe tonight."

Bonucci is one of the oldest members of the squad, but youngsters like player of the tournament goalkeeper Gianluigi Donnarumma, midfielder Nicolo Barella and winger Federico Chiesa impressed at Euro 2020 to give hope for a bright future.

"We had the disappointment of the failure to qualify for the World Cup, but you always need to believe, strive for the top and never give up," Bonucci added.

"This is a renaissance for Italian football. I'm sure now that this squad and coach will still make plenty of headlines going forward."

More mockery of the system awaits

NABID YEASIN



"Thank you Mahmudullah Riyad bhai for your service with the red ball," wrote Bangladesh's ODI skipper Tamim Iqbal, who missed out playing in the one-off Test against Zimbabwe in Harare due to a knee injury but was part of the Tigers' Test squad, after Bangladesh had ensured their second-ever Test series triumph overseas on Sunday.

Like Tamim, almost everyone in the Bangladesh side paid tribute to Mahmudullah through their posts on social media on Sunday night.

Hence, it was clear that Mahmudullah has featured for the last time in Bangladesh's white kit. In fact, it was made clear on the final day of the Harare Test when the players gave Mahmudullah a guard of honour, the traditional way of paying tribute to a player for his services to the game. Interestingly, however, there was no official announcement after the game, despite all the indications. And skipper Mominul

Haque, who would go on to thank Mahmudullah for his 'contributions and love' on his Facebook page later on, said he did not know anything about Mahmudullah's retirement when asked in the post-match press conference.

Contradictory and odd, right? Truth is, the whole Mahmudullah issue, like every other affair of Bangladesh cricket and its management, has been murky from the very beginning. In Mahmudullah's case, the murkiness began back in February 2020 when the cricketer was dropped from the Test side after Bangladesh were hammered by Pakistan in a Test in Rawalpindi.

While it was understandable that he was dropped from the Test squad owing to a series of poor performances prior to the Rawalpindi Test, Mahmudullah's total expulsion from the Test side and his removal from even the future plans for Tests was never justified given the quality of batsman the 35-year-old is.

The pattern of nonsensical decisions continued and

Mahmudullah was recalled at the last minute for the Zimbabwe Test after 17 months of forced exile. Mahmudullah added to the turbulence with his sudden decision of retiring despite, according to Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) president Nazmul Hassan, informing the BCB of his intentions



to play all formats for the foreseeable future before the tour of Zimbabwe.

The only plausible reason behind no official announcement of retirement from Mahmudullah yet could be ascertained from the fact that BCB president Hassan had asked the player to take a decision in this regard after returning to the country following the completion of the Zimbabwe tour.

But with what has transpired in the past few days, it is clear that Mahmudullah has made up his mind about not stepping onto the field wearing the white kit of Bangladesh anymore. His unbeaten career-best 150 against Zimbabwe most certainly will be his last showing in Tests.

Does Mahmudullah's sudden decision of leaving Test after such a remarkable knock has anything to do with his inexplicable axing from the Test squad 17 months ago? Did he want to leave the format after proving a point? And was Mahmudullah even right to call time in the middle of a series despite informing the cricket board in writing about his intentions to carry on playing Tests beforehand?

The answers to these questions could be left to pondering but, the one thing that is almost certain is that there will be many more such ludicrous dramatic events in Bangladesh cricket in the future and it will only be a mockery of the cricketing system from the ones who work within it.



'I believe I'm the best'

AFP, London



Novak Djokovic said Sunday he considers himself the "best player" after winning a record-equalling 20th Grand Slam title but refuses to anoint himself as the "greatest of all time".

The 34-year-old went to 20 majors alongside Roger Federer and Rafael Nadal courtesy of a sixth Wimbledon title secured by a 6-7 (4/7), 6-4, 6-4, 6-3 victory over Italy's Matteo Berrettini.

If he wins a fourth US Open in September, he will become the first man since Rod Laver in 1969 to complete the calendar Grand Slam and just the third in history.

"I consider myself best and I believe that I am the best, otherwise I wouldn't be talking confidently about winning Slams and making history," said Djokovic.

"But whether I'm the greatest of all time or not, I leave that debate to other people."

"I said before that it's very difficult to compare the eras of tennis. We have different racquets, technology, balls, courts. It's just completely different conditions that we're playing in, so it's

very hard to compare from 50 years ago to today.

"However, I am extremely honoured to definitely be part of the conversation."

Despite his caution, Djokovic knows he has time and momentum on his side.

At 34, he is a year younger than Nadal and has the best part of six years on Federer who turns 40 in four weeks' time.

Nadal skipped Wimbledon after losing to Djokovic in the French Open semi-finals last month.

Federer made a quarter-final exit at the All England Club.

Eight of Djokovic's 20 Slams have been won since he turned 30.

He has also won seven of the last eight Grand Slam finals he has contested, with his only defeat in that time coming against Nadal at the French Open last year.

There was a time when it was believed Pete Sampras's total of 14 majors would never be bettered.

But Federer went to 15 Slams with victory in the 2009 Wimbledon final and reached 20 at the 2018 Australian Open.



(L-R) Lionel Messi, Angel Di Maria and Giovanni Lo Celso speak with Messi's wife Antonella Rocuzzo upon their arrival at the Islas Malvinas airport in Rosario on Sunday following their 1-0 win over archrival Brazil in the Copa America final the previous night. The Argentina captain dedicated the Copa America triumph to his family, his country and late idol Diego Maradona through a post on his Instagram account.

PHOTO: AFP